

Preston Rural District Council.

Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year ended 31st December, 1941.

To the Chairman and Members of the Preston Rural District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

The Report of your Medical Officer of Health for the Year ended 31st December, 1941, is compiled in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Health, contained in Circular 2604, 24th March, 1942.

This Circular restricts the scope of Reports of Medical Officers of Health, and lays down very definitely, on the grounds of National security, that any details which might in any way, however remote, be useful in conveying information to the enemy, must be omitted. No reference must be made to local populations, to activities in connection with wartime industrial, military, or other important developments, such as extensions of water supply or sewerage works, or other public utility undertakings.

In this First Part of my Report I have, therefore, confined my observations on the work of the past year to subjects approved by the Circular, but in the Second Part of the Report, which is to be submitted privately to the Rural District Council, I have included the vital statistics, mortality tables, references to sanitary and other works carried out, so that, at the conclusion of hostilities, a Comprehensive Report may be prepared embracing all the usual statistical records, and details of the health activities during the whole period of the war, so that there will be no break in the continuity of the Rural District Council's health records.

Part I.—Interim Report.

Vital Statistics.—In Part 2, full details are given similar to the statistics of pre-war years, showing the numbers of births and deaths, the birth and death-rates, and the usual analysis of the causes of death and their distribution in the various Townships of the Rural District.

It can, however, be stated here that there was a slight increase in the birth-rate and satisfactory reductions in the general death-rate and infant mortality.

It is a matter of some satisfaction that the health of the people has been so well maintained after three years of war.

Matters arising from or connected with the war.

Government Evacuation Scheme.—From a Return prepared on the 1st January, 1942, the number of evacuees then billeted in the Rural District was—unaccompanied children 576, adults, 101, and accompanied children 84.

Air Raid Precautions.—Ten First Aid Depôts have been provided in the Rural District, together with two Mobile Units, with the necessary equipment and personnel. A 20 H.P. Austin Motor Ambulance is available for accidents and other purposes, and special arrangements have been made ensuring full co-operation with the Preston County Borough Ambulance Service. Two Lectures were given, one organised by the Home Guard and one by the A.R.P. Services.

Emergency Medical Service.—An Emergency Hospital is available in the Rural District for war casualties and civilians.

I have again co-operated as closely as possible with the Military and other Services.



Infectious Diseases.

As in 1940, the year under report did not produce any special features as regards the principal infectious diseases. Scarlet fever gave rise to 51 cases against 48 in the preceding year, diphtheria 19 against 13, and enteric fever 3 against 8. Ninety per cent. of these cases were isolated in hospital. Pulmonary Tuberculosis contributed 13 cases and non-pulmonary 12, against 20 and 16 respectively in the preceding year.

Hospital Accommodation.—The Preston, Fulwood and Longridge Joint Hospital has 32 beds, and the Small-pox Hospital at Elswick 26 beds.

Diphtheria Immunisation.—The following paragraphs describe the Immunisation Scheme :

In 1941 The Minister of Health was pressing for the protection of all children up to the age of 15 against Diphtheria. To provide immunisation against a large mass of the population in an extensive Rural Area presented problems of administration, organisation and transport which were not easy of solution. Dr. Hall, the County Medical Officer of Health, was asked for assistance, and he requested Dr. Wray to assist and to use the services of such County Health Visitors as could be spared from other duties.

It was decided to organise this work by arranging groups of children in the respective Parishes, and accordingly each child in every school had a leaflet advocating immunisation, with a Form of Consent attached for the signature of those parents who desired protection for their children. The children were then arranged into groups of about forty, and each group was immunised by a local medical practitioner.

The areas North and South of the Ribble were organised separately, but the work in both districts was carried out simultaneously, and the groups were so arranged that the Health Visitors concerned, and the equipment necessary for sterilisation, travelled the minimum distances between groups of children. By following this plan on both sides of the Ribble simultaneously it was possible to immunise almost the whole district in a space of three months.

So far as possible, children under school age were included in these groups, but where there were no children of school age in the family, inevitably many were not included. After the groups of school children had been completed, therefore, some groups of pre-school age children were arranged and completed. In this work, and in the immunisation of the less accessible schools, Dr. Johnstone, of the County Staff, rendered valuable assistance.

The three County Health Visitors, the Misses Canton, Reeves and Singleton, gave freely of their time, and their assistance was essential and valuable.

The number of children immunised was:—1-5 years, 666; 5-15 years, 2271; the approximate percentages respectively being:—1-5, 26 %; 5-15, 48 %.

Later in the year, in order to accelerate the immunisation of children under school age, it was decided to initiate a scheme of individual immunisation by which each child when it reached the age of one year could go to its own Doctor and be immunised without having the necessity of waiting till a group could be arranged.

By the end of 1941 the percentage of children in the Rural District immunised by all agencies, private and public, was estimated to be:—1-5, 27 %, 5-15, 49 %.

A supply of diphtheria anti-toxin is readily available, free of charge, at all times at a local chemists.

Disinfection.—Houses, &c., disinfected numbered 88. The steam disinfectors at Fulwood Institution and at the Isolation Hospital are used for bedding, clothing, &c.

Measures for Maternity and Child Welfare, &c.—There has been no relaxation in the efforts to maintain the County Council Clinic at Catforth and the number of home visits by the County Health Visitors are given in Part 2. In March, 1942, a new Clinic was opened at Penwortham. Facilities are available for maternity cases to be admitted to hospital where the home surroundings are unsuitable, and an Obstetrician is available for consultations.

Midwives.—There are 2 County Council Midwives and 4 Nursing Association Midwives in the Rural area.

County Nursing Association.—Fifteen Nurses provided by the Lancashire County Nursing Association serve the Rural area ; during the year ended March, 1942, cases attended were—midwifery 79, maternity 60, T.B. 2, and general 1,101. The total visits paid were 26,917. A Table showing these services in the various Townships is included in the Appendix.

Other Health Services.

Provision of Milk for Necessitous School Children.—Under the County Scheme 5,523 pints of milk were supplied during the year.

Pathological Examinations.—426 specimens were examined for the Rural Council at the Preston Royal Infirmary Department of Pathology. Details are appended.

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area.

Notwithstanding the many additional calls on your Sanitary Staff on matters connected with the war effort, the normal sanitary work in the Rural District has been well maintained.

Details of the sanitary work, &c., accomplished are set out fully in the Appendices (Part 2) ; only brief references to the principle items are here given.

Inspections of premises numbered 1,400, re-inspections 387, other visits 560, notices served 66, inspections of shops 21, sanitary defects remedied 117, verminous premises dealt with 3.

New Houses.—Twenty-seven new houses were erected by private builders. The housing conditions for a Rural District are generally satisfactory.

Water Supplies.—The water supplies are obtained from four sources.—Preston, Manchester, Fulwood, and the Fylde Water Board. The supplies generally are excellent as shown by the bacteriological and chemical examinations. The supplies to schools are on the whole satisfactory.

Sewerage.—Outfall works are provided in five Parishes ; elsewhere a septic tank is provided for each house.

Scavenging.—Seventeen Parishes are now scavenged by direct labour, and disposal of refuse is by controlled tipping. Over 7,000 tons of refuse were collected. Houses on the water-carriage system number 7,786, with pail closets 1,055

Protection of the Food Supply.—The 649 dairy farms on the Register and the premises of 119 registered retail purveyors are inspected from time to time, 418 inspections being made during the year. Samples taken for analysis totalled 106, of which 62 were milk ; five milks were deficient in fat ; in three instances prosecutions followed and fines were inflicted. Samples of milk submitted for biological test numbered 194, ten were positive. Milks examined bacteriologically 132, and for sediment test 253. The County Medical Officer of Health reported to me a number of cases of T.B. in milk produced at farms in the Rural area and appropriate measures were taken in each case ; the affected cattle were slaughtered.

Several Notices were received declaring and defining certain places in the Rural District to be affected with or suspected of being affected with Anthrax. Subsequent investigation proved that these suspected cases were not Anthrax.

Several Licences to produce Tuberculin Tested milk or Accredited Milk at premises in the Rural area have been granted by the County Council.

Town Planning.—The activities of this Department have been seriously curtailed due to war conditions. Fifty-two applications to develop have been considered during the year.

Parks, Playing Fields and Open Spaces.—Many of the playing fields, &c., have been let off for either grazing or ploughing. Details are given in the Appendix.

Salvage.—The total weight and cash value of materials salvaged were—368 tons, 15 cwts. valued at £1,300 2s. 5d.

In conclusion I desire again to express my sincere thanks to the Officers of the Council for their assistance in many directions, and to the Council for their generous kindness and courtesy extended to me at all times.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

CHARLES J. TRIMBLE,

Medical Officer of Health.

August, 1942.

